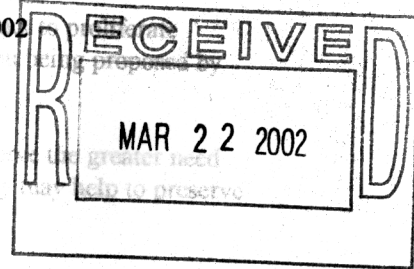


March 18, 2002



Chief
Permits Section
Conservation & Education Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear NMFS:

The proposed new regulation that will make it illegal to swim in proximity with free-swimming dolphins in Hawaii, at first glance, looks like an interest in and protection of the Cetaceans in our beautiful waters. There are many more concerns of significant importance, currently under your jurisdiction, much more dangerous and harmful to the cetaceans, that need to be addressed.

Of utmost concern to those of us familiar with the Cetaceans, are the current sanctions approved by the NMFS that allow for the massive killing, harassment and enslavement of hundreds of thousands of Cetaceans every year. NMFS permits wholesale slaughter by the Tuna Industry. NMFS has sanctioned "takes" of many hundreds of Cetaceans by the US Military in weapons testing and use and subsequent slavery of certain varieties of dolphins being used as actual weaponry. NMFS allows the unbridled onslaught by the Oil industry using piercingly loud seismic equipment (louder than LFAS) and explosives with little or no regard to surrounding sea life. NMFS should examine its own role in these, by far, more critical issues facing Cetaceans and their survival from the unbridled assault by this military/industrial complex.

If the intention truly is to protect the cetaceans, you need to look at the current practices under your jurisdiction. These need to be reviewed immediately and steps need to be taken to cease these horrific sanctions.

I am emphatically opposed to the NMFS proposed regulation to prevent interaction of humans and free-swimming dolphins in US waters. Is it your intention to foster an abomination of personal freedoms held in the highest regard by the United States Constitution? There are far more affective ways that we can combat dolphin abuse than the creation of regulations.

The proposed regulations appear to separate humans from the dolphins/whales. It is my experience that separation breeds apathy and ignorance, paving the way for the cetaceans' continued abuse. I am very concerned and protective of the dolphins. Dolphins and whales are a valued resource of the ocean and our world and have the right to living free of harassment and infringement of their lifestyle. I offer a solution, allowing safe human/dolphin interaction. If the NMFS agency is sincerely interested in addressing the problem, consider some of the following as noteworthy examples of how to enlighten, as opposed to intimidate, potential offenders who may carelessly be placing dolphins at risk:

- Clear and factual information flow through public forums and media.
- Dolphin-swim Certification programs approved by a non-governmental agency such as the Humane Society, the Sierra Club or PADI scuba certification.
- Professional Associations of guides, boat operators and rental companies who can self-regulate such programs.
- Physical outposts distributing real, factual information in problem areas where the public has been shown to be reckless in their interaction with dolphins.
- Promotion of positive information about the nature of dolphins and their behavior that will serve to encourage respect for their environment and domain.

- A public accessible database fully supported with government funding that will act to proliferate positive and factual information rather than the current system of police intimidation being proposed by this NMFS regulation.

These are but a few of many constructive ideas that are already available and will serve the greater need for understanding and respect of the Cetacean race by humans and more importantly may help to preserve the most precious resource known to us: Planet Ocean.

I am clearly in favor of achieving a balance to deal with the ever-increasing numbers of tourists wanting to go to an area for this unique experience and preserve the continued safe interaction between curious humans and curious dolphins. I see the dire need to address this consistent trend of interest and guide it in the most sensible, positive ways that provides abundance for the community yet still maintaining safety for the local dolphin pods. Ignorance is the number one danger we face.

Sincerely,

Terri A. Coppersmith

Terri A. Coppersmith
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Westminster, Maryland 21158

A citizen for safe and sensible human-dolphin interaction.